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Best Practices and Guidelines

for

Large Print Documents

used by the

Low Vision Community

by the

Council of Citizens

with

Low Vision International

An Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind

Arlington, VA

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Introduction

People with low vision are unique, being neither fully sighted nor totally blind. Visual acuities vary greatly, as do individual needs. This is especially true regarding the wide range of criteria and guidelines that are used by printing houses and publishers to produce "large print" documents for the low vision community.

In order to eliminate the confusion surrounding the production of large print documents, the Council of Citizens with Low Vision

International (CCLVI) formed an ad hoc committee to identify, review, and evaluate a variety of large print documents currently available. (See Appendix) After having done so, the committee has developed the following "Best Practices and Guidelines for Large Print Documents used by the Low Vision Community." Simply stated, these guidelines were compiled by persons with low vision to assist in the production of the large print documents that they, themselves read.

Guidelines

The following are best practices and guidelines for large print documents. The order in which

these items appear does not denote any ranking or relative importance.

- **In general, at least an 18 point, and preferably a 20 point, bold, sans serif, mono or fixed space font is desirable. Adobe's Verdana, Helvetica, Tahoma, Arial; Linotype's Futura Light Bolded; and Typography's Gotham Rounded fonts currently offer optimal readability for large print documents when the aforementioned parameters are applied.**

- **Large print documents, with a line spacing (leading) of at least 1.5, provide good readability and help reduce eye strain.**

- **Titles and headings should be larger than the text of the document and contain both upper and lower case letters. Titles and headings should be aligned left where possible.**

- **Large print documents that display the text in blocked paragraphs which are aligned left are preferable. Double spacing between paragraphs is necessary for readability.**

- **Bulleted text should be identified by large solid dark bullets, with double spacing between items.**

- **Eliminate "widows" and "orphans" when continuing text from one page to the next.**

- **Page numbers should be the same font style and of at least the same font size as the document text.**

- **In single-sided, unbound documents, the page number should be positioned in the top right corner. Additionally, it is helpful to have the page number appear at the bottom center. In book formatted documents, the page number should be located in either the upper or lower outer corner of each page.**

In either case, a margin of at least 0.75 inches is needed to accommodate the page number.

- **The paper used in large print documents should have a matte or dull finish to reduce glare. An eggshell color minimizes eye strain.**

- **Paper used in large print documents should be no less than twenty pound bond to avoid "bleed thru."**

- **Emphasis is best achieved by the use of asterisks, dashes, double bolding, or by**

simply underlining an individual word. The use of color or italics is not acceptable for low vision readers.

- Horizontally connect two columns of information with leader dots, as in a table of contents. When a table appears in a large print document, it should be kept on one page. Horizontal and vertical lines between rows and columns will facilitate tracking in tables with multiple columns.

- Binding large print documents that are up to approximately 20 sheets of paper can be saddle stapled. Thicker documents must be

bound with an appropriate spiral or wiro binding to facilitate flattening for ease of reading. An ample margin is needed to accommodate the binding.

- **The enlargement feature on a copy machine does <u>NOT</u> produce large print documents. Copy machines create fuzzy text, which is often on oversized pages, making the document cumbersome. The use of electronic editing and formatting produces large print documents of superior quality.**

- **Low vision readers have trouble with graphs, charts, and pictures in documents. An effort should be made to isolate them on**

individual pages accompanied by explanatory captions.

- **Color and hue are not as important as high visual color contrast between a background and a text to those with low vision. The greater the difference between the "light reflectance values" (LRV) of two adjacent surfaces, the greater the contrast. Large print documents produced with a high degree of contrast receive high marks from the low vision community.**

- **It is generally understood that the characteristics which have the greatest effect on the readability of large print**

documents can be ranked as follows: spacing, font size, contrast, and font style. Printing houses and publishers should focus on these characteristics when producing documents for the low vision community.

- **Depending on eye condition, some low vision readers can read text that is presented in two columns, while others can read text in full width format.**

Conclusion

The intent of this review and summary of large print information is to provide a one-stop,

comprehensive resource for producers and consumers of large print documents. This document is a summary of the most important large print issues. Attention is also called to the many documents listed in the Appendix, which contains sources of additional information on this important subject.

While developed specifically for use in large print documents, these best practices are not exclusive to this medium. Many of these guidelines can easily be applied to other formats, such as: printed labels for a variety of uses, signage of all sorts, a wide range of computer applications, and many others. The

proper mix of spacing, font size, style, and contrast, can enhance the readability of any printed material used by the low vision community.

The Council of Citizens with Low Vision International (CCLVI), an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind (ACB), has been an advocate for issues that are specific to the low vision community for decades. Since our members and others have a wide variety of eye conditions, we welcome opportunities to develop best practices and guidelines such as these, to help us all "stay in the game." ##

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Appendix

Compilation of Large Print Experiences by Donna Pomerantz, 2009, at dpomerantz@earthlink.net.

"Effective Color Contrast" from Lighthouse International by Aries Arditi, 2010.

"A Guide to Making Documents Accessible to People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired" for the American Council of the Blind (ACB) by Jennifer Sutton, 2002.

Large Print Schoolbooks Power Point Summary,

presentation at Getting in Touch With Literacy Conference by Joan Hudson-Miller, Todd Lewis, and Jane Vogel, 2009.

"Making Text Legible" from Lighthouse International by Aries Arditi, 2010.

Printing Guidelines from the Xavier Society for the Blind.

"Psychophysics of Reading in Normal and Low Vision," Chapters 1, 3, and 4, by Gordon E. Legge, PhD, 2007.

Reader's Digest World Specifications used to produce Reader's Digest Large Print by Joyce

Altman, 2010.

"Reading Materials in Large Print: a Resource Guide," National Library Service (NLS), issued in 2005.

"The Structured Low Vision Exam" by Bruce P. Rosenthal, 1991.

A Summary of the National Association for the Visually Handicapped (NAVH) Standards that are followed by Random House Large Print by Jane Ramsburg, 2010.

Tiresias Large Print Font - a typeface for large print publications, from

www.tiresias.org/fonts/index.htm.

Type Size Chart - 2 - 010; Supplemental Info and Summary of Data - 2009 from Library Reproduction Services (LRS) by Joan Hudson-Miller (retired).

Typography, Gotham Type Face from www.typography.com.

US Postal Service Publication 347 - Mailing Free Matter for the Blind and Visually Impaired Persons, 1998.

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